

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0709
INFO AMEMBASSY PRIORITY
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

UNCLAS BORDEAUX 0053

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IN SOUTH WEST FRANCE

SUMMARY: VOTERS HERE ARE AMBIVALENT. WANTING CHANGE, MANY
DISTRUST THE MAJOR PARTIES AND THE APPARENT CHOICE OF
SOCIETY OFFERED. THIS, PLUS REGIONAL TRADITIONS, WILL FRAGMENT
THE VOTE IN THE FIRST ROUND. IN THE SECOND ROUND THE MAJORITY
IS EXPECTED TO IMPROVE ITS POSITION GREATLY. THERE IS NO
CONSENSUS ON WHETHER THE IMPROVEMENT WILL BE SUFFICIENT FOR
THE MAJORITY TO SQUEAK-BY. END SUMMARY

AS THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS APPROACH, THE MOST APPARENT FEELINGS
OF VOTERS IN THE SOUTH-WEST APPEAR TO BE OF AMBIVALENCE. IN
SPITE OF OPINION POLLS FAVORING THE LEFT, VOTERS SUPPORTING
THE "MAJORITY" ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT IT CAN'T
REALLY HAPPEN. EVEN SUPPORTERS OF THE LEFT SEEM AFRAID TO GET
THEIR HOPES UP. THOUGH MANY POLITICIANS OF THE LEFT HAVE TOLD
ME THAT THEY "SHOULD" WIN', NONE HAS ASSURED ME THAT THEY
WOULD.

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MUCH OF THE VOTING POPULATION IS DISSATISFIED WITH THINGS AS
THEY ARE AND WITH THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES. THEY DON'T
LIKE THE SEEMINGLY FINAL CHOICE WHICH IS BEING OFFERED THEM.
AS A RESULT OF THIS, THE VOTE IS LIKELY TO BE SPLINTERED IN
THE FIRST ROUND, MARCH 12. THERE SHOULD BE A CONSIDERABLE VOTE
FOR MINOR PARTIES, INCLUDING ECOLOGISTS, AND FOR INDEPENDENT

CANDIDATES.

ON THE MAJORITY SIDE, THOUGH THE PR AND RPR ARE COOPERATING IN SOME DISTRICTS, THESE ARE OFTEN DISTRICTS IN WHICH THE MAJORITY HAS A LESS-THAN-EVEN CHANCE AGAINST A SOCIALIST INCUMBENT. IN OTHERS, WHERE THERE SEEMS A GOOD CHANCE TO GAIN A SEAT FROM THE LEFT OR WHERE A MAJORITY INCUMBENT IS IN DANGER, RPR, PR, RADICALS AND OTHERS HAVE NOT HESITATED TO JUMP IN.

ON THE LEFT, COOPERATION BETWEEN THE SOCIALISTS AND LEFT RADICALS ON ONE HAND AND THE COMMUNISTS ON THE OTHER IS, OF COURSE, NON-EXISTENT. IN SOME DISTRICTS WITH COMMUNIST INCUMBENTS, THE MAJOR PREOCCUPATION OF IMPORTANT LOCAL SOCIALISTS IS TO DISLODGE THEM --- EVEN AT THE COST OF LOSING THE SEAT TO THE MAJORITY IN THE SECOND ROUND. THIS IS THE CASE, FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE FIRST AND SECOND DISTRICTS OF THE HAUTE-VIENNE. THE COMMUNISTS HAVE SHOWN NO SIGN OF BEING ANY KINDER TO SOCIALIST INCUMBENTS IN THE FIRST ROUND. ONE DIFFERENCE MAY BE THAT NON PARTY MEMBER COMMUNIST VOTERS WILL PROBABLY BE MORE INCLINED TO SWITCH TO A SOCIALIST ON THE SECOND ROUND THAN SOCIALIST OR LEFT RADICAL VOTERS WILL BE TO SWITCH TO A COMMUNIST.

THE REGIONAL, RADICAL AND INDIVIDUALIST TRADITIONS OF THE SOUTH-WEST WILL PLAY A PART IN THIS ELECTION. THE CHIRAC WING
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OF THE RPR IS (WITH THE COMMUNISTS) LEAST REPRESENTATIVE OF THESE TRADITIONS. AS A RESULT, MANY MAJORITY CANDIDATES, INCLUDING SOME RPR CANDIDATES, HAVE SOUGHT TO BROADEN THEIR BASE TO INCLUDE THESE TRADITIONS AND TO DISTANCE THEMSELVES FROM A COMPLETE IDENTIFICATION WITH CHIRAC OR EVEN GISCARD. EVEN THE RADICALS (VALOISIENS) HAVE TO DIFFERENTIATE THEMSELVES FROM JJSS TO ACCOMPLISH THIS.

SECOND ROUND PREDICTIONS ARE HARD TO COME BY -- EXCEPT THAT EVERYONE THINKS ITS RESULTS WILL BE QUITE DIFFERENT FROM THE FIRST. MOST VOTERS, OF WHATEVER PERSUASION, EXPECT THE SHOWING OF THE MAJORITY TO BE MORE IMPRESSIVE IN THE SECOND ROUND THAN IN THE FIRST AND A GOOD MANY BELIEVE THE MAJORITY WILL SQUEAK BY.

MARVIN

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